

**MANAGED FOREST LAW CERTIFIED GROUP**

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## BACKGROUND

The Wisconsin Managed Forest Law, as administered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, has been assessed by third-party auditors and found to be in conformance with sustainable forest certification standards established by the American Tree Farm System® (ATFS) Group Certification program [TENTATIVE – PENDING COMPLETION OF FIELD AUDITS!]. The ATFS certificate awarded to DNR's Managed Forest Law Certified Group allows members to claim that timber harvested from their land is produced from well-managed forests meeting ATFS standards for sustainability. Participation in the MFL Certified Group is entirely voluntary for woodland owners in MFL and separate from statutory MFL regulations. This chapter outlines the procedures used to manage the entry and departure of group members, maintain records, pay fees, monitor performance of group members, conduct internal and external audits, and administer other activities relative to ATFS standards.

### Authority and Purpose

The Department created MFL Certified Group and entered into the ATFS agreement under authority in §23.11, 28.01, 28.07 and 28.11, Wisconsin Statutes. Specific to MFL, the purpose clause at §77.80, Wisconsin Statutes, vests authority in the DNR "to encourage the management of private forest lands for the production of future forest crops for commercial use through sound forestry practices, recognizing the objectives of individual property owners, compatible recreational uses, watershed protection, development of wildlife habitat and accessibility of private property to the public for recreational purposes."

Development of the Managed Forest Law - ATFS Certified Group will:

- Elevate private woodland owners' confidence in sustainable forest management through third-party certification;
- Improve timber harvest quality on MFL lands through better monitoring;
- Strengthen MFL's effectiveness as a sustainable forestry public awareness and landowner education program;
- Recognize the sound forestry practiced by over 30,000 MFL participants by rewarding them with access to global markets demanding certified raw materials;
- Retain our vital Wisconsin forest industries and the thousands of jobs they represent by building a credible supply of certified raw materials;
- Improve the Department's organizational management and consistency; and
- Provide an alternative mechanism to the traditional system for administering Tree Farm incentives.

### History

The American Tree Farm System® (ATFS) was founded in 1941. It was envisioned as a method to educate and motivate private forest owners to sustainably manage their forests to assure the United States Congress and the public that the forests are being renewed and managed responsibly.

The Department of Natural Resources and the Wisconsin Tree Farm Committee have cooperated to promote sustainable management of small private forest holdings since the early 1950's. Together with forest industry partners, those efforts have recognized about 3,600 traditional Tree Farms covering approximately one million acres in the state as of 2004. Department staff accomplishes an estimated 80% of the on-site work with Tree Farm landowners. Tree Farm educational programs including field tours, conferences, publications and the selection of an annual Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year continue to provide sustainable forestry outreach to a broad audience.

Since 2000, the American Tree Farm program (administered by the American Forest Foundation - AFF) has developed more rigorous certification standards in response to a growing global demand for certified forest products. An Independent Standards Review Panel representing a cross-section of forestry community leaders refined the Tree Farm Standards and Performance Measures. The review also considered whether the proposed modifications were adequate and appropriate for small-scale family forest owners and other qualified participants in the US. Non-industrial private forest owners with ten to ten thousand contiguous acres are eligible for ATFS certification.

After extensive public review and comments, the AFF Board of Trustees ratified the current standard in December 2002 for implementation beginning in 2004. Subsequent reviews of the AFF Standards will be conducted every five years. The 2004 AFF Standards require each certified Tree Farmer be in compliance with all relevant laws and regulations, have a written forest management plan, reforest following harvest, protect water and soil quality, conserve wildlife and biodiversity, and

consider visual impacts, among other considerations. (For a complete list of the relevant requirements, see the AFF Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification on Private Lands, page 21-18.) Third-party auditor comparison of the AFF Standards with the sustainable forestry objectives and requirements of the Wisconsin Managed Forest Law verifies they are compatible.

In addition to refining the traditional Tree Farm Certification program with improved standards and performance measures, AFF developed a Tree Farm Group plan to broaden the reach of forest certification. It promotes sustainable forestry by awarding Tree Farm Group designation to landowner assistance programs operated by forest industries, landowner associations, consulting firms, government resource agencies or other legal entities. Considering the affinity between the Wisconsin MFL and Tree Farm standards, MFL is an excellent fit for the Tree Farm Group Certification scheme.

## THE GROUP ORGANIZATION

### Roles and Responsibilities

#### Group Organization

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is the Group Organization that oversees all aspects of maintaining the Tree Farm Group Certificate (with only one Group Certificate number, used for all members). DNR administration of the program includes the Division of Forestry, the supervisory hierarchy of the DNR Regions, DNR Service Foresters and technicians, and Cooperating Foresters providing private landowner assistance. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is the custodian of the ATFS Group Certificate and other documents. The Department determines eligibility and membership requirements of the Group as outlined in this handbook.

#### Group Manager

The Division of Forestry - Forest Tax Law Section Chief is designated as the Group Manager who administers the affairs of the MFL - ATFS Certified Group. More broadly, the Group Manager may delegate authority to central office staff, Regional staff and Cooperating Foresters. The Group Manager (including delegated roles):

- Maintains the records of the Group Organization.
- Processes applications for membership in the Group Organization.
- Conducts ongoing monitoring of conformance of the Group Members with the AFF Standards.
- Applies for Group Certification and selects an accredited certification body to conduct the certification audit.
- Represents the Group Organization throughout the audit process.
- Maintains the ATFS Group Certificate on behalf of the Group Organization and controls the claims that the Group Organization can make.
- Is responsible for making sure that any public claims about the independent certification are accurate and truthful, and consistent with truth in advertising guidelines. (Use of the Tree Farm Logo should be in accordance with ATFS Logo Use Guidelines.)
- Is responsible for ensuring timely reporting and payment of fees to ATFS.

#### Group Members

The Group Members are the qualified MFL participants (owners of 10 to 10,000 total acres with MFL Forest Stewardship Plans) that collectively make up the MFL Group Organization and meet the requirements of the AFF Standards. Group Members that voluntarily choose to participate can include their lands in the Group Certificate and enjoy the benefits and privileges of being a Certified Group Member. In addition to the property tax incentives and forestry planning assistance afforded by the Managed Forest Law, the primary Group benefit includes the ability to market timber as ATFS certified under the Group Certificate. (There are no individual certified Tree Farm numbers for Group Members, all of whom will use the one MFL Certified Group certificate number.)

Group Members are encouraged to be actively involved in the Wisconsin Tree Farm Committee to promote sustainable forestry. They can assist the State Tree Farm Committee by providing training to other landowners, hosting tours on their property, contributing to newsletters and publications, and being involved in the ATFS Group Certification monitoring. A

major advantage of Group Certification is the positive peer influence of other dedicated Tree Farmers and the sharing of practical forestry experiences and knowledge. Group Members receive all of the same rights and benefits as individual Tree Farmers certified through the State Tree Farm Committee.

### Group Membership Fees

The Department of Natural Resources will pay all mandatory fees related to participation in the Tree Farm Group Certification program. Mandatory fees include the cost of the third-party certification (initial and 5-year audits), the AFF Tree Farm Group Certification application fee (\$125), the Annual ATFS Group Administrative Fee (\$3,000), and the ATFS Education and Information Fee in the form of providing on-going landowner education programs administered by the Department. There will be no fee assessed to MFL Certified Group Members. Participation in the MFL Certified Group is free for qualified MFL landowners.

The Department does not provide the official American Tree Farm sign to MFL Certified Group Members. The Department may, however, develop an approved MFL Certified Group sign in cooperation with the Wisconsin Tree farm Committee that could be optionally ordered through independent vendors at the expense of Group Members. Use of the Tree Farm logo and sign shall be consistent with approved guidelines (ATFS Policies and Procedures 5-6). Subscription to the American Tree Farm Magazine and attendance at Tree Farm training conferences or meetings are also optional activities at the expense of individual Group Members.

The Department of Natural Resources will offer forest management planning assistance and cost sharing programs within the framework of state laws and regulations. Additional forest management assistance from private consultants and the expenses of implementing forest management activities prescribed in forestry plans are the responsibility of Group Members.

### Landowner Entry and Departure from the Group Organization

#### General Eligibility

The MFL Certified Group option will be available on a voluntary basis to all MFL participants owning 10 to 10,000 *total* acres provided they have a parcel-specific forest stewardship plan for the land. Land enrolled under a single MFL Order of Designation may be either in or out of the MFL Certified Group, but not a mixture of the two. "MFL large ownerships" as defined in chapter NR 46.18(4), Wisconsin Adm. Code, with general management commitments are not eligible to join the MFL Certified Group. Such large ownerships (generally forest products companies with their own professional forestry staff) should seek forest certification through other programs. Wisconsin statutes also allow continued MFL designation for parcels of less than ten acres that remain after an authorized transfer. Such remainders of less than ten acres are not eligible to participate in the MFL Certified Group.

#### Group Membership of 2005 and Earlier MFL Orders

The initial MFL Tree Farm Group Membership subscription for MFL participants with 2005 or prior orders of designation will be administered through a "Group Departure" declaration. An information campaign culminating in a Group Departure option mailing will be conducted during the first half of 2005. MFL participants (with parcel-specific plans) who do not return a departure declaration will be enrolled as MFL Certified Group Members. Any MFL participant who exercises an initial Group Departure option is free to join the Certified Group at a later time by submitting an application for membership. MFL Certified Group members will be informed of certification requirements on an on-going basis through individual mailings, newsletter articles, meetings, web alerts and other appropriate means. The Group Manager will track participation in the Certified Group with the MFL master database.

#### Group Membership for New MFL Orders and Transferred Lands

New MFL applicants and people acquiring MFL land through transfers shall be given an opportunity to be involved in the MFL Certified Group. An information packet explaining the Tree Farm Group program will be provided to new applicants and transferees so they can make informed decisions. A separate Group Departure option mailing will be made to 2006 and 2007 petitioners already in the DNR process. The MFL Transfer Form 2450-159 will include basic information about the MFL Group Certification option.

Large-ownership industrial MFL tracts transferred to individual landowners will have site-specific management plans prepared by the Department within one year of transfer, unless the landowner chooses to submit a consultant-prepared (DNR Certified Plan Writer) plan at their own expense. Transferees electing to be Group Members may use the Group Certificate number when the Department approves a stewardship management plan for the tract. (Note: Transferees must have a DNR approved cutting notice in order to harvest timber. DNR foresters cannot approve cutting notices without adequate

management planning considerations.)

#### Voluntary Departure from Group Membership and Rejoining the Group

Group Members may elect to depart from the MFL Certified Group at any time without prejudice to continued MFL eligibility by submitting an MFL Group Departure Form (2450-\_\_\_\_). Anyone voluntarily withdrawing from MFL shall be dropped from the certified group. Re-enrollment into the Certified Group will be allowed if the landowner has a Department approved forest management plan with no outstanding, major Corrective Action Requests pending. (A Corrective Action Request would identify specific non-conformances with ATFS Standards, the causes of the non-conformances, remedial practices and completion dates, preventative measures to avoid reoccurrence of the non-conformances, and signatures to indicate approval of the Department and agreement by the landowner.)

Note that the only occasion an MFL landowner would need to complete an MFL Certified Group Membership Application Form (2450-\_\_\_\_) is if they had previously departed from the group. Otherwise, MFL Certified Group membership is automatic as explained on the MFL Forest Stewardship Management Plan and MFL Transfer Form. MFL landowners must explicitly complete an MFL Group Departure Form if they choose to be excluded from the MFL Certified Group.

#### Withdrawal from the Group

A withdrawal action under Chapter 77.88, Wisconsin Statutes, will terminate the MFL Certified Group membership.

#### Enforcement and Dispute Resolution Process

All MFL enforcement issues shall be handled with procedures detailed in Chapter 60 of the Forest Tax Law Handbook. The Department's enforcement procedures will serve as the MFL Tree Farm Certified Group Correction Action Request Form and Corrective Action Plan.

The steps listed in Chapter 60 assure that the landowner is apprised of the MFL regulation or Tree Farm standard, core performance measure and indicator of concern and given an opportunity to respond or correct a problem within a reasonable time period. Inspecting foresters should strive to resolve any disputes in a respectful and professional manner. Should resolution of a Tree Farm specific issue with a Group Member prove elusive, the inspecting forester shall refer the matter through channels to the Tax Law Section Chief - Group Manager. Team, Area or Regional Forestry Supervisors may intercede to help resolve issues before passing a complaint up the line to the Group Manager. The process shall include documentation of the facts and Tree Farm standard or performance measures involved.

Should the Regional Forester be unable to bring closure to a Tree Farm specific issue, the Group Manager will make a determination on decertification of the property based on the facts of the case and the appropriateness of the plan to gain conformance that was developed by the field forester. For an appeal of the Group Manager's decision, the landowner must notify the DNR Bureau of Forest Management Director within 30 days of the letter of de-certification. Upon notification of appeal, the Bureau of Forest Management Director shall convene a Dispute Resolution Committee. The committee will be composed of three members including another Group Member or forester agreed to by the landowner, a non-DNR member of the Wisconsin Tree Farm Committee and a qualified Tree Farm inspector chosen by the Department (excluding the forester who brought the complaint). The Dispute Resolution Committee will advise the Bureau of Forest Management Director, whose decision shall be final. All non-departmental costs associated with the dispute resolution committee shall be born by the group member making the appeal.

As an alternative to Department ordered de-certification, foresters may ask a Group Member to voluntarily withdraw from the MFL Certified Group. Department staff and Group Members should work in a positive and collaborative manner to address any findings of non-conformance and to correct any problems. The formal expulsion process should be used only as a last resort.

### Background Information and Materials

The Department will develop appropriate informational materials to help prospective members understand the various policies, procedures and rules of the Group. The MFL application packets, Forest Tax Law Newsletter and DNR web site are examples of the material that will be made available. The AFF Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification of Private Forests will be accessible to the Group Members so that they understand the requirements.

### GROUP ADMINISTRATION

The Forest Tax Law Section Chief with assistance from other central office staff, Regional staff and Certified Plan Writers in the Cooperating Forester program has the major responsibility for:

- Administering the Group
- Ensuring that The AFF Standards are being implemented and achieved
- Accepting new Group Members into the existing Group Organization, and
- Guiding the Group Organization and its members through the ATFS Group Certification Process.

### Interpretation of MFL and AFF Standards

The Group administrators must interpret and appropriately apply the AFF Standards in the context of the Managed Forest Law program and be able to clearly explain the requirements to the Group Members. These considerations are addressed through the Forest Tax Law Handbook (HB24505), the Private Forestry Handbook (HB24705), the Silviculture and Forest Aesthetics Handbook (HB243105), Wisconsin Forest Management Guidelines (Pub FR-226-2003) and Certified Tree Farm Inspector training.

### Member Commitment to the Certified Group Standards

The MFL Stewardship Plan (2450-132) and MFL Transfer (2450-159) forms will include information that inclusion in the MFL Certified Group is automatic unless the landowners signs and returns an MFL Certified Group Departure form (2450-\_\_\_\_). The plan and transfer form will indicate that the landowner agrees to designation in the Certified Group, a desire to manage the land consistent with the AFF Standards, intent to comply with relevant laws, agreement to the Group Program dispute resolution process, and consent to allow access to the property for purposes of MFL and Group Member inspection. The information will also stipulate that the landowner may depart from the Certified Group at any time without affecting their MFL eligibility.

### Management Plan

Group Members must have DNR-approved, parcel-specific MFL stewardship plans. The provisions for mandatory and optional (recommended) practices that apply to general MFL orders also apply to plans that are prepared for members of the MFL Certified Group. MFL Forest Stewardship plans for Group Members may have additional recommended practices, depending upon the interests of the landowners. *(MFL Certified Group Members are not subject to any additional or unique mandatory practices that are not identified in statute or rule for all MFL participants.)*

A qualified Tree Farm inspector must approve MFL plans for land to be included in the Certified Group. The qualified inspector may be the forester preparing the MFL stewardship forestry plan or the DNR forester or Area/Regional reviewer approving the MFL packet.

### Designation of New Group Members

The Group Manager will provide the landowner with an MFL Certified Group record to document the acceptance of new Group Members into the Group Organization. Appropriate documentation may include correspondence with the applicant and any applicable Corrective Action Request forms.

The Department will maintain digital records regarding Group Members in the MFL master file database. Hard copy forms (such as the Management Recommendations Record - Form 2470-21, timber sale inspection monitoring checklists and any

applicable management guidance correspondence) will be maintained in the field foresters' landowner case files. These records will be available for administering the Group Organization and for purposes of Group Certification audits and reviews.

The Group Manager will ensure that any new Group Members are added to membership and mailing lists, receive appropriate information from the American Tree Farm System, and take care of any other administrative details. A database of MFL Order Numbers (plus the county, municipality, section and landowner name for each order) belonging to the Certified Group will be posted on the Web so that any timber purchaser can verify harvests claiming use of the ATFS Group Certificate number. Mailing lists including landowner names and complete addresses may not be distributed for purposes that are not directly related to MFL and MFL Certified Group administration or landowner education.

#### Training and Education

The Group Manager (through Team, Area and Regional Forestry Supervisors) will evaluate training needs of the Group Organization and individual Group Members to ensure sufficient knowledge to implement and achieve the AFF Standards. That should include periodic assessment of the need for technical forestry training including implementation of BMPs, silvicultural techniques appropriate to the area, relevant laws and regulations, fish and wildlife protection, etc.

The Department will work with the Wisconsin Tree Farm Committee, The Sustainable Forest Initiative State Implementation Committee, University Extension and other partners to conduct training regarding the AFF Standards, the ATFS Group Certification Process, the audit process and possible audit findings, the corrective action process and other professional and landowner education.

#### Monitoring

Department Foresters shall verify Group Members' conformance with the AFF Standards as part of inspections related to scheduled mandatory MFL forest stewardship practices. Foresters shall keep contact records — Management Recommendations Record (Form 2470-21) and on the Private Land Accomplishment (CFM) Report form 2400-100E — for their visits to Group Member lands. If inconsistencies with MFL or AFF standards are found, the foresters shall pursue MFL enforcement procedures as outlined in Chapter 60 of the Forest Tax Law Handbook or initiate the Tree Farm Corrective Action Request as explained in this chapter.

Team, Area or Regional Supervisors *or* the field foresters completing inspections of Group Member lands must have completed the ATFS Tree Farm Inspector training course.

The Department will use PlanTrac notification letters, guidance letters, cost-sharing practice plans, cutting notice approval forms and related correspondence to document the monitoring process and to report appropriate findings to the individual Group Members. When a non-conformance is identified during monitoring, the inspecting forester shall follow the procedures in Chapters 20 and 60 of the Forest Tax Handbook or other relevant directives and work with the Group Members to achieve compliance or take appropriate enforcement action. The Department forester must approve the corrective actions proposed for any non-conformance with MFL or AFF standards. Implementation shall be monitored. MFL mandatory practice and Tree Farm corrective action guidance shall be tracked in a digital database (PlanTrac) and reported on the CFM Report Form 2400-100E. Notice of Investigation copies will be sent to the Forest Tax Section Chief.

All management guidance correspondence, enforcement documentation and related forms shall be retained in the Group Member's file.

#### Departure from the Group

Group Managers need to ensure that Group Members are committed to long-term forest management in conformance with the AFF Standards. If the Group Member elects to sell the property for whatever reason, disassociate from the MFL Certified Group or withdraw from the MFL, the Group Manager shall remove the member from the roster or list of Group Members.

#### Maintaining Group Records

The Group Manager is responsible for maintaining all Group Organization records and documents. The MFL Certified



Group records include the following:

- Background information on the Group Organization
- A list of Group Members and their applications for membership
- Group Organization monitoring reports
- Copies of audit findings and reports
- Group Organization Corrective Action Request (CAR) forms
- Other relevant documents and records
- Departure notifications from Group Members

The Group Manager will receive the Final ATFS Group Certification Audit Report from the Certification Body and communicate the findings to the Group Organization and Group Members. If a certification audit results in a Corrective Action Request, the Group Manager must coordinate with the Group Organization or individual Group Members to develop corrective action plans and work to ensure timely implementation. Once the Certification Body issues the ATFS Certificate, the Group Manager will hold the certificate on behalf of the Group Organization.

The Group Manager is responsible for maintaining current and accurate records from the audit process. Some of the records that should be kept include:

- A list of Group Members that were part of the ATFS Certification Audit
- The total number of acres included within the scope of the Audit
- A copy of the Final Report and any Corrective Action Requests issued by the Certification Body
- Copies of Group Organization Corrective Action Plans that are implemented to close out the CAR
- Evidence of monitoring the Corrective Action to ensure the same problem does not recur
- Notifications from Group Members of their departure from the Group Organization

## PROGRAM REVIEW

### Annual Reporting to the American Tree Farm System

The American Tree Farm System requires Group Organizations to annually update certain information regarding the Group Organization including number of landowners and acreage in the program, new entries and departures from the membership, and other information. The annual reporting information is contained in ATFS form GO-07 (Group Organization Annual Reporting).

The Group Manager will submit the annual reports to the American Tree Farm System by the designated date, and maintain copies of past annual reports on file.

### DNR Annual Reports and Internal Reviews

In addition to annual reporting information required by ATFS, the Group Manager will prepare an annual report covering other aspects of the MFL program needed to evaluate overall program performance, consistency and management efficiency. The report would include, among other measures, total enrollment, petitions for entry, withdrawals, transfers, harvest numbers and volumes, yield tax receipts, scheduled mandatory practices, recon updates for completed practices, corrective action requests and a summary of enforcement cases.

On a rotating basis among the DNR Regions, the Forest Tax Section will conduct an annual field review. Central Office staff and a Regional representative will visit a selection of field stations to discuss MFL and MFL Certified Group administration. Topics might include record keeping, stewardship planning, timber sale monitoring, working relationships with landowners and Cooperating Foresters, cooperation with other agencies, field visits and other activities. The Group Manager will summarize the findings, areas needing improvement and commendations in a report for the November Forestry Leadership Team.

### Five-Year Audits

By the end of every fifth year (the next being due by the ATFS Group Certificate anniversary in 2010), the Department will engage an ATFS Group Certification auditor to review the performance of the MFL Group Program relative to the AFF

Standard and ATFS Group program. The external audit of the MFL Certified Group may be one component of a broader periodic, five-year Private Forestry Assistance Program Review if authorized by the Forestry Leadership as part of the Department's Consistency Plan.

## 2004 -2008 AFF STANDARDS OF SUSTAINABILITY FOR FOREST CERTIFICATION OF PRIVATE LANDS

The AFF Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification of Private Lands are required of all Group Members that voluntarily choose to participate in the MFL Certified Group. Group Members need to ensure that they are in conformance with the AFF Standards, Core Performance Measures and Primary Indicators. Group Members will be periodically monitored and audited to evaluate whether they are implementing and achieving the AFF Standards.

### Standard 1: Ensuring Sustainable Forests

The American Forest Foundation's (AFF) Standards of Sustainability promote the growing of renewable forest resources on private lands while protecting environmental benefits and increasing public understanding of all benefits of productive forestry.

#### Performance Measure 1.1

Qualified forest owners **must** comply with AFF's Standards of Sustainability. American Tree Farm System (ATFS)'s volunteer network of accredited, qualified natural resource managers will conduct field verification of landowner conformance.

#### Indicators 1.1.1

An accredited Tree Farm Inspector **must** inspect qualified properties to assure conformance with AFF's standards of sustainability.

#### Indicator 1.1.2

Tree Farm inspectors will audit certified properties every five years. Properties that fail to meet AFF's standards and guidelines will be decertified. [Landowners may seek review of de-certification decisions through ATFS's formal dispute resolution process. Also, the MFL Certified Group Organization audit qualifies as the five-year reinspection.]

### Standard 2: Compliance with Laws

Forest management complies with all relevant federal, state and local regulations and ordinances.

#### Performance Measure 2.1

Forest owners **must** comply with all relevant federal, state, county, and municipal laws and regulations.

#### Indicator 2.1.1

Landowner affirms that he/she complies with all relevant laws and regulations, and that he/she will correct conditions that led to adverse regulatory actions, if any.

#### Indicator 2.1.2

Landowner obtains advice from forestry consultants, public agency natural resource managers, or contractors who are trained in, and familiar with, applicable laws, regulations and published Best Management Practices for forestry.

### Standard 3: Commitment to Practicing Sustainable Forestry

Forest owners demonstrate their commitment to sustainability by developing and implementing a long-term forest management plan.

#### Performance Measure 3.1

Forest owners **must** have a written forest management plan consistent with the scale of forestry operations of the property.

#### Indicator 3.1.1

Management plans include: title page; type of ownership (e.g., fee simple, limited partnership, etc.); owners goals appropriate to the management objectives; tract map noting stands and conditions, important features including special sites, and management recommendations that address wood and fiber production, wildlife habitat, owner-designated fish, wildlife and plant species if desired, environmental quality, and, if present and desired by the landowner, recreational opportunities.

#### Indicator 3.1.2

Management plan is active, adaptive, and embodies the owners' current objectives, remains appropriate for the land certified, and reflects the current state of knowledge about forestry and natural resource management.

#### Performance Measure 3.2

Forest owners assure management activities are conducted in accordance with the management plan.

#### Indicator 3.2.1

On-site visit, interviews, and records confirm management activities are being conducted in accordance with the plan.

### Standard 4: Reforestation

Forest owners provide timely restocking of desirable species of trees, compatible with regional ecosystems on harvested areas and idle areas where tree-growing is the land use objective.

#### Performance Measure 4.1

Land **must** be reforested with natural seeding, sprouting, direct seeding, or reforestation with tree seedlings.

#### Indicator 4.1.1

Harvested forest land **must** achieve satisfactory stocking levels reflecting the forest owner's management objectives, within five years after harvest, or within a time interval as specified by applicable regulation, whichever is shorter.

### Standard 5: Air, Water and Soil Protection

Forestry practices maintain or enhance the environment, including air, water, soil, and site quality.

#### Performance Measure 5.1

Forest owners **must** adhere to State Forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs) and comply with all relevant forest practices act(s) and ordinances.

#### Indicator 5.1.1

Landowner affirms that he/she complies with all relevant laws and regulations, and that he/she will remedy or has remedied any conditions that led to adverse regulatory actions, if any.

#### Indicator 5.1.2

Landowner **must** minimize disturbances within riparian

zones.

Indicator 5.1.3

On-site visit confirms that landowner is conducting management activities in accordance with BMPs and all relevant forest practices act[s] and ordinances.

Performance Measure 5.2

Application of forest chemicals **must** not exceed the levels necessary to achieve specific management objectives.

Indicator 5.2.1

Chemicals are applied only when necessary to meet specific management objectives.

Indicator 5.2.2

Management plans consider integrated pest management as a preferred means of controlling insect pests, pathogens, and vegetative competition.

Indicator 5.2.3

Chemicals are applied in accordance with EPA-approved labels and meet or exceed all human health and environmental safety requirements on the label, and in local, state, and federal law.

Performance Measure 5.3

Where prescribed fire is used, the forest owner **must** plan appropriately for its application.

Indicator 5.3.1

Landowner affirms that if and when prescribed fire is used, it is conducted in accordance with the owner's management plan and with state and local laws and regulations.

Indicator 5.3.2

On-site visit confirms prescribed fires, if used, were conducted in accordance with the management plan and applicable laws and regulations.

**Standard 6: Fish, Wildlife and Biodiversity**

Forest management activities contribute to the conservation of biodiversity and maintain or enhance habitat for native fish, wildlife, and plant species, with emphasis on natural plant and animal communities and rare plants and animals.

Performance Measure 6.1

Landowners are encouraged to confer with their local natural resource agencies, state natural resource heritage programs, or other knowledgeable sources about rare species or species of concern that occur on their property.

Indicator 6.1.1

Where practical, management plans consider and address opportunities to protect rare species and special habitat features.

Performance Measure 6.2

Forest management activities **must** maintain or enhance habitat for owner's designated fish, wildlife, and plant species as identified in the management plan

Indicator 6.2.1

Forest management activities **must** maintain or improve habitat for owner's target game and non-game fish and wildlife species.

**Standard 7: Forest Aesthetics**

Forest management practices minimize negative visual impacts of forest activities.

Performance Measure 7.1

Landowners **must** manage their forest with concern for visual impacts, in a manner consistent with size and scale of their forestry operations.

Indicator 7.1.1

On tracts of significant visual exposure, management plans and forest operations may include: roadside buffers, access entry "dog-legs," limited harvests in certain areas, and adaptation of other visual management techniques.

**Standard 8: Protect Special Sites**

Special sites are managed in a way that recognizes their unique characteristics.

Performance Measure 8.1

Forest management practices **must** recognize historical, biological, archaeological, cultural, and geological sites of special interest.

Indicator 8.1.1

Management plan and forest operations identify and manage for special sites in a manner consistent with forest owner's objectives, the unique features of the site, and the size and scale of the property.

**Standard 9: Wood Fiber Harvest and Other Operations**

Wood fiber harvests and other forest operations are conducted in accordance with the management plan and with sensitivity to other forest values (e.g., water quality, regeneration, wildlife habitat, biodiversity, special sites, etc.).

Performance Measure 9.1

Landowners **must** comply with the management plan described in Standard Three (3).

Performance Measure 9.2

Landowners **must** adhere to all national, state, and local laws and regulations applicable to forest management when conducting forest operations.

Indicator 9.2.1

In selecting contractors, landowners seek loggers, foresters, and other forest management contractors who have completed recommended training and education programs offered in their respective states.

Indicator 9.2.2

Loggers and contractors conducting wood fiber harvests and other forest management operations carry required Workers Compensation and general liability insurance.

[Note: AFF indicators designated with "**must**" are considered primary indicators and are included as MFL Certified Group audit factors. Additional AFF interpretations and definitions available in the ATFS Group Certification Handbook may also apply.]

